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REMARKS

Claims 11-15 are pending in the application. Claim 11 is amended herein. Entry of the amendment and favorable reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Claim 11 is amended to emphasize further that the image forming apparatus is operative in relation to an arbitrary image output apparatus. Such feature has already been recited in the claim and considered by the Examiner. Accordingly, such amendment to claim 11 does not raise any new issues of patentability and merely reemphasizes the features of the claim.

I. REJECTION OF CLAIMS 11-15 UNDER 35 USC §103(a)

Claims 11-15 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) based on *Yamamoto et al.* in view *Ikenoue et al.* Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn for at least the following reasons.

Claim 11 recites that the process for an image formation based on the imputed image data is inhibited in a case where identification information of the arbitrary image output apparatus is not confirmed in each confirming process for the identification information. In other words, the confirming processes check whether identification information identifying the arbitrary image output apparatus has been provided prior to allowing formation of the image.

Yamamoto et al. describes a printer which waits for an ID code to be imputed or otherwise provided before permitting a confidential print job. However, judgment must be made as to whether or not the inputted ID code matches any of the IDs stored in a storage section 102. Thus, a source which is permitted to provide image data is in no way considered *arbitrary*. (See e.g., Column 31, Line 63-Column 32, Line 13). Hence, like the prior art, *Yamamoto et al.* requires that permissible users of the image forming apparatus be predetermined unlike the present invention. (See e.g., Spec., Page 3, Lines 3-10).

Ikenoue et al., like *Yamamoto et al.*, does not permit copying of confidential information unless security information is provided. (See e.g., Column 20, Lines 31-

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40). However, in *Ikenoue et al.* it is presumed in each of the instances that the source information is provided (i.e., the apparatus recognition code as shown in Fig. 3).

Ikenoue et al. does not teach or suggest conditioning the ability to print an image based on the provision of the apparatus recognition code. Rather, printing is conditioned on the presence of a password.

Accordingly, neither *Yamamoto et al.* nor *Ikenoue et al.* provides for copying image data inputted from an arbitrary image output apparatus based on the provision of identification information identifying the arbitrary image output apparatus.

More generally, *Yamamoto et al.* discloses a confidential printing which is printed out upon receipt of an ID code input, and *Ikenoue et al.* discloses controlling copy operation according to the additional data previously embedded in the image data.

In *Yamamoto et al.*, an ID code inputted by a user is identified when print data is outputted. However, identification information of an arbitrary image output apparatus is not identified.

In *Ikenoue et al.*, among additional information, apparatus ID codes are information which is registered in an additional information management unit included in the image processing apparatus. On the other hand, apparatus ID codes are not identification information of an arbitrary image output apparatus which is externally connected to the image forming apparatus.

More specifically, *Yamamoto et al.* is directed to judging whether or not the inputted ID code is identical to any one of the ID codes stored in the storage section 102. If the ID code is not registered, printing out can not be performed. Thus, an arbitrary image output apparatus, one which may not have an ID code stored in the storage section 102, may not be registered and printing cannot be performed. As mentioned above, *Yamamoto et al.* is like the prior art in requiring that permissible users of the image forming apparatus be predetermined unlike the present invention. (See e.g., Spec., Page 3, Lines 3-10).

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On the other hand, in the present invention, the judgment on whether or not to form an image is performed based on presence or absence of identification information which may specify even an arbitrary image output apparatus.

Therefore, the present invention is quite different from Yamamoto.

Ikenoue et al. merely discloses that a new hard copy can be prevented to be produced from a hard copy with embedded additional data (see the specification column 5, lines 29 to 39). Furthermore, in *Ikenoue et al.*, according to the description from column 15, line 65 to column 16, line 7, formation of the image data in which additional data is not embedded is not prohibited. Moreover, there is a disclosure that the copying is prohibited unless a password or book code is inputted even if additional data is embedded (see the specification column 17, lines 7 to 21). Again, however, it is presumed in each of the instances that the source information is provided (i.e., the apparatus recognition code as shown in Fig. 3). *Ikenoue et al.* does not teach or suggest conditioning the ability to print an image based on the provision of the apparatus recognition code. Rather, printing is conditioned on the presence of a password.

Therefore, the present invention is also different from *Ikenoue et al.* An arbitrary image output apparatus, one which may not have an apparatus recognition code stored in the storage section, may not be registered and printing cannot be performed. *Ikenoue et al.* is also like the prior art in requiring that permissible users of the image forming apparatus be predetermined unlike the present invention. (See e.g., Spec., Page 3, Lines 3-10).

The present invention thus has novelty and nonobviousness over *Yamamoto et al.* and *Ikenoue et al.* on the basis of the feature of claim 11, i.e., "an image formation process based on the inputted image data is inhibited in a case where identification information of the arbitrary image output apparatus is not confirmed in each confirming process for the identification information". Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

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II. CONCLUSION

Accordingly, claims 11-15 are believed to be allowable and the application is believed to be in condition for allowance. A prompt action to such end is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner feel that a telephone interview would be helpful to facilitate favorable prosecution of the above-identified application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

Should a petition for an extension of time be necessary for the timely reply to the outstanding Office Action (or if such a petition has been made and an additional extension is necessary), petition is hereby made and the Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees (including additional claim fees) to Deposit Account No. 18-0988.

Respectfully submitted,

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